

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

10. ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
2010/11

WARD(S) AFFECTED: None.

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report is intended to support the Environment Scrutiny Committee in reviewing and planning its work programme for 2010/11.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(A)	That the work programme detailed in this report be reviewed and agreed; and
(B)	The scrutiny officer be requested to make any changes, additions or arrangements as might be discussed in the meeting.

1.0 Background

1.1 Items previously required, identified or suggested for the work programme are set out in **Essential Reference Paper B**.

1.2 In order to meet the shortened deadlines for the 'emergency budget' discussions, some items originally scheduled for this November meeting had to be brought forward – and other items had to be held over until November. These changes were made with the agreement of the Chairman.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 Members are reminded that further details regarding the 2011/12 budget consultation were published in the Members' Information Bulletin Issue 25 dated 29 October 2010. Members are requested to follow the instructions and guidance, and submit comments to the on-line forum during the consultation period which runs from 1 to 26 November. This approach to the scrutiny process allows the full range of opinions across the council to be captured and your individual views to be recorded against each budget proposal.
- 2.2 Members' collated comments will be presented in a summary report included alongside the findings from the external budget consultations in the Consolidated Budget Report 2011/12 – 2014/15, due to be presented to the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting on 18 January 2011 and Executive on 8 February 2011.
- 2.3 As reported at the last meeting of this committee, East Herts and its four neighbouring district/boroughs are keen to open up a dialogue with the county council regarding a joint scrutiny approach on certain aspects of 'Herts Highways'.
- 2.4 The discretionary budgets allocated to local Highways Panels are very small when compared to the total Highways spend and concern has been voiced that there does not seem to be the opportunity for districts/boroughs to influence or scrutinise the bigger picture and the larger areas of expenditure.
- 2.5 The East Herts Director of Customer and Community Services has now met with his counterparts in Welwyn Hatfield, North Herts, Broxbourne and Stevenage on this issue and a joint letter has been sent to the county council. They have requested this matter be put on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting of Executive Members from HCC and the districts/boroughs (due 8 November 2010).
- 2.6 The Director of Customer and Community Services will be able to give Members a verbal update on the outcome of those discussions at the Environment Scrutiny meeting.
- 2.7 Members are given advanced notice of two dates agreed by Scrutiny Chairmen for training and scrutiny evaluation/planning. The two skills development sessions are designed for experienced scrutiny members and are being delivered here in

advance of any induction level training which may be offered after the May 2011 district council elections.

SCRUTINY ACTIVITY – as agreed by Scrutiny Chairmen		
27 Jan 2011 Council Chamber	5:30 – 6:30	Skills Development (1) – Questioning for Scrutiny
	6:30 – 7:30	Scrutiny Evaluation Workshop and setting objectives for 2011/12
3 Feb 2011 Council Chamber	5:30 – 6:30	Skills Development (2) – Assessing the quality of evidence
	6:30 – 7:30	Scrutiny Topic Planning 2011/12

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper ‘A’**.

Background Papers

Four principles of good public scrutiny published by CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny) summarized in **Essential Reference paper B** or [click here for link to CfPS external site](#)

East Herts Council’s own current guidelines for selecting issues for review.

A summary of this information is printed at the back of **Essential Reference Paper ‘B’**.

Contact Member: Councillor Diane Hollebon, Chairman of Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Contact Officer: Ceri Pettit, Head of Strategic Direction and Performance Manager – Extn 2240.

Report Author: Marian Langley, Scrutiny Officer – Extn 1612.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives</p>	<p>Effective use of the scrutiny process contributes to the Council's ability to meet two core objectives:</p> <p>Fit for purpose, services fit for you <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p>Leading the way, working together <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p> <p>In monitoring the performance of the council's services and action plans, the Committee is monitoring the Council's achievement of all of its corporate objectives.</p> <p>Any additional issues identified for scrutiny will relate to at least one of the Council's corporate objectives.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Potential topics for scrutiny are always invited from members of the public, the Executive and all Members.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>According to the Council's constitution, the scrutiny committees are responsible for the setting of their own work programme in consultation with the Executive and in doing so they shall take into account wishes of members on that committee who are not members of the largest political group on the Council.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>Any additional meetings and every task and finish group has resource needs linked to officer support activity and time for officers from the services to make the required input.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Matters which may benefit from scrutiny may be overlooked. The selection of inappropriate topics for review would risk inefficient use of resources. Where this involved partners, it could risk damaging the reputation of the council and relations with partners.</p>